

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 214386

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ORIGIN EUR-04

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /005 R

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APPROVED BY:EUR:RPM:JJMARESCA

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R 280312Z AUG 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

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FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM BUDAPEST DATED AUGUST 23, 1976 SENT
SECSTATE WASHDC INFO USIA WASHDC, BONN, BUCHAREST, MOSCOW,
PRAGUE, SOFIA, WARSAW IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BUDAPEST 2869

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, PFOR, CSCE, HU

SUBJ: HUNGARIAN TELEVISION STAGES EAST-WEST DEBATE ON CSCE,
DETENTE AND ARMS REDUCTION

1. IN WHAT IS A MAJOR NEW STEP FOR HUNGARIAN MEDIA, AND
MAY WELL BE A FIRST FOR SOCIALIST COUNTRIES, HUNGARIAN
TELEVISION STAGED ON PRIME-TIME AUGUST 18 THE SECOND OF
A SERIES OF DIRECT OPEN DEBATES BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN
MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES, ON THE SUBJECTS OF CSCE, DETENTE AND
ARMS REDUCTION.

2. THE FIRST PROGRAM, WHICH WAS SHOWN IN MAY, AND WHICH THE
WESTERN PARTICIPANTS WERE A WEST GERMAN AND AN ITALIAN
CORRESPONDENT, RECEIVED ALMOST NO ADVANCE PUBLICITY AND WAS
NOT SEEN BY EMBOFFS. THE APPARENT SUCCESS OF THIS
FIRST ATTEMPT HOWEVER LED TO A DECISION TO MAKE THE
PROGRAM "INTERNATIONAL FORUM" A REGULAR ONE, AND THE
SECOND SHOW ALREADY RECEIVED CONSIDERABLY MORE ATTENTION.

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3. THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE AUGUST 18 PROGRAM WERE THEO

SOMMER, EDITOR OF DIE ZEIT, ANTHONY COLLINGS, NEWSWEEK
BONN EDITOR, ALBRECHT MOLLE, FOREIGN AFFAIRS EDITOR OF
GDR RADIO AND ALEXANDER DRUZHININ OF MOSCOW RADIO AND
TELEVISION. HOST WAS JANOS HAJDU OF HUNGARIAN TELEVISION,
AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMENTATOR OF HSWP DAILY NEPSZABADSAG.

4. THE SHOW WAS A CONTRAST TO A MOSCOW ORIGINATED DISCUSSION
ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS WHICH WAS SHOWN ON HUNGARIAN
TELEVISION A FEW WEEKS AGO, AND WHICH FEATURED TAPED
COMMENTS BY SENATORS HUGH SCOTT AND JAMES ALLEN WITH
SUBSEQUENT REBUTTALS BY GEORGE ARBATOV AND ANOTHER SOVIET
COMMENTATOR. HERE THE PARTICIPANTS FACED EACH OTHER
DIRECTLY, AND USING THE AID OF A BATTERY OF SIMULTANEOUS
INTERPRETERS AND EARPHONES, COULD DISCUSS AND RAISE SUBJECTS
FREELY AND REBUT ARGUMENTS IMMEDIATELY.

5. TO OUR GREAT SURPRISE, EVERYONE RECEIVED EXACTLY
EQUAL TIME. THE BEST PREPARED AND MOST SKILLED DEBATER
WAS THEO SOMMER OF DIE ZEIT, WHO DEFTLY TICKED OFF
MULTIPLE STATISTICS ON THE INCREASED PACE OF AMRS BUILD-UP
AMONG WARSAW PACT FORCES, SPOKE OPENLY OF THE FEARS IN
THE WEST ARISING FROM MOSCOW'S AGGRESSIVE FOREIGN POLICY,
REFERRED TO 14,000 CUBAN TROOPS IN ANGOLA AND EXPRESSED
CONCERN THAT EXTENSIVE WESTERN CREDITS TO SOCIALIST COUNTRIES
MADE IT EASIER FOR THEM TO SPEND MORE OF THEIR OWN RESOURCES
ON ARMAMENTS.

6. COLLINGS HAD A SOMEWHAT MORE BENIGN APPROACH, BUT DID
SPEAK OF DOMESTIC U.S. POLITICAL CONCERS ABOUT UNI-
LATERAL SOVIET ADVANTAGES IN DETENTE, EXPLAINED THAT NOT ONLY
CRUISE MISSILES BUT ALSO BACKFIRE BOMBERS CREATED PROBLEMS
WITH SALT, AND SAID THAT WHILE THE U.S. MAY HAVE ITS
CONSERVATIVES, THE SOVIET UNION ALSO HAD ITS HAWKS WHO
OPPOSED DETENTE. THE LATTER POINT WAS THE ONLY ONE WHICH
DREW AN INSTANT AND PASSIONATE DENIAL BY DRUZHININ.

7. BOTH SOMMER AND COLLINGS KEPT DETAILED NOTES DURING THE
DEBATE WHICH WAS TAPED SEVERAL DAYS PRIOR TO SCREENING.
AFTER THE PROGRAM WAS SHOWN, A POINT BY POINT REVIEW WITH
THE PAO WAS MADE TO DETERMINE WHAT MATERIAL, IF ANY, WAS
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CUT OR MODIFIED. THIS REVIEW INDICATED THAT NO TAMPERING
WHATEVER OCCURRED WITH THE ORIGINALTAPE WITH THE EXCEPTION
ON THE ELIMINATION OF ONE SINGLE SENTENCE OF THEO SOMMER'S
IN WHICH HE CALLED THE SOVIET UNION AN EXPANSIONIST,
IMPERIALIST POWER.

8. FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE VIEWER THE PROGRAM MUST
HAVE OFFERED A TRULY UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR BOTH SIDES

OF THE EAST-WEST ISSUES DEBATED FAIRLY AND OPENLY BY ARTICULATE EXPONENTS OF BOTH SIDES. FROM AN EMBASSY VIEWPOINT ALL STATEMENTS BASICALLY REFLECTED WELL-KNOWN POSITIONS OF BOTH SIDES, BUT TO HEAR WESTERN ARGUMENTS MADE OPENLY ON HUNGARIAN TELEVISION WAS CERTAINLY A STARTLING NEW EXPERIENCE.

9. THE TWO SOCIALIST PANELISTS WERE OF COURSE WELL PREPARED, AND ABLY RATTLED OFF ALL THEIR USUAL ARGUMENTS. BUT THEY DID NOT GET THE LAST WORD, AND THEY WERE NOT SKILLED ENOUGH TO REBUT EVERYTHING SOMMER SAID, SINCE UNDER THE EVEN-HANDEDLY ENFORCED RULES OF THE DEBATE HE WAS ABLE TO COME UP WITH COUNTERARGUMENTS FASTER THAN HIS OPPONENTS COULD COME UP WITH REBUTTALS.

10. COMMENT: THIS RATHER DARING NEW VENTURE BY HUNGARIAN TELEVISION, ALONG WITH SOME OTHERS REPORTED RECENTLY SUCH AS THE PROGRAM ON HUNGARIAN-AMERICANS, THE EXTENSIVE FIRST-HAND COVERAGE OF BOTH THE DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN POLITICAL CONVENTIONS, AND THE INTERVIEW WITH BISHOP ZOLTAN KALDY ABOUT HIS U.S. TRIP, OFFER ENCOURAGING EVIDENCE THAT HUNGARIANS ARE INDEED MINDFUL OF CSCE IMPLEMENTATION. BUDAPEST 2769, ANALYZING RECENT HUNGARIAN POSITIONS ON CSCE, INDICATES THAT AS FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE HERE THE GOH SEEMS TO BE OUT IN FRONT OF MOST OF ITS FELLOW SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. IN THE INFORMATION FIELD, THE EARLY SUPPORTING EVIDENCE SEEMS TO BE WORTHY OF NOTE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, DISARMAMENT, DETENTE, TELEVISION BROADCASTING, PROGRAMS (PROJECTS), COLLECTIVE SECURITY
AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE214386
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EUR:RPM:JJMARESCA
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760329-0020
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976089/aaaaahln.tel
Line Count: 144
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 APR 2004 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <10 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HUNGARIAN TELEVISION STAGES EAST-WEST DEBATE ON CSCE, DETENTE AND ARMS REDUCTION
TAGS: SOPN, PFOR, HU, CSCE
To: NATO BRUSSELS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006